



Vagabondave: Bonnie and Dave

Dave - Guest: Hi, I'm David Law, L A W, it's spelled.

Bonnie - Guest: Okay, and I'm Bonnie Carlton.

Dave - Guest: We have a blog called Vagabon and Dave

Bonnie - Guest: .COM.

Dave - Guest: .COM. It's really a travel log, that is, we write blog entries about those places that we visit. Most of what our blog has been focused on has been out of the United States. There has been a few blogs about the US, but we've spent a lot of time in Mexico and wrote a number of blogs about that place. We've also spent a lot of time in Europe, in Dubai, and more recently, in Australia and New Zealand. That's sort of the focus of what we've been doing. We talk a lot about what we see, what we experience. Our blogs tend to be heavy on photographs, as well as text, and we're really trying to reach an audience of friends and people who have come upon our blog through Bonnie's Facebook page and a further Facebook page we have for our blog alone called Vagabon and Dave. That's about where we are.

Stephen- Host: Today we have David and Bonnie joining us. David and Bonnie are both retired executives and they now blog at vagabondave.com. Today they'll be helping us what living overseas and a nomadic lifestyle is all about. Thank you Bonnie and David. Tell us about how your endless holiday is going.

Bonnie - Guest: I don't see any end in sight. I think we'll just do this until we drop. We're really enjoying the nomadic lifestyle.

Dave - Guest: Yeah. We've traveled almost every way imaginable Stephen. At one time or another we worked abroad for a high tech company and traveled at the best hotels in first class all the time on aircraft. And we've had a Volkswagon Vanagon, one of those campervans that have a top that pops up. We've had that since 1991. We still have it. We're driving it today. It's



an 84'. We've long traveled, traversed this country and Mexico, even down into Guatemala and Belize in our camper van. Now, more recently, we've bought an RV, a real motorhome, in Europe. It's only 24 feet long but it has everything, including a door on the bedroom.

Bonnie - Guest: A queen sized bed.

Dave - Guest: A queen sized bed.

Bonnie - Guest: You can walk around.

Dave - Guest: I guess it's just advancing age that's driven us to such a comfort level. Dan, the Van, is getting a little more difficult all the time. The camper, the RV we have in Europe is going to be extremely comfortable.

Bonnie - Guest: I don't feel like we roughed it. We spent 7 years on a sail boat sailing around the length and breadth of the Mediterranean. Again, another mobile, nomadic existence. When we felt a sense of completion about that we sold that and started the more land based, or land yacht based mode of travel.

Stephen- Host: It's in your DNA. It sounds like you were traveling for work and you loved to travel, and the fact that you were on a yacht, that alone is a whole adventure by itself. Today a lot of the people listening are investigating alternative travel lifestyles, including RV's as an alternative to hotels, as an AirBNB or maybe a home away as an alternative to a hotel. For a lot of people investigating this, they're thinking about trying it early, maybe pre-retirement if they can work from the road, or some people have already retired and they're thinking about this lifestyle. One of the big steps that you took is downsizing and selling your home to free you up. Maybe you could tell us the conversation you both had about that decision and what that meant for you emotionally when you were able to downsize and sell your house.

Bonnie - Guest: Stephen, we had about a 4,000 square foot home in Santa Fe New Mexico with a lovely garden and guest house. We really enjoyed it but it started to become a real anchor for us where we were having to spend time there to justify having it. We were very successful renting it out when we were gone on both doing AirBNB and VRBO and Craigslist even. We managed to keep income going while we tested out traveling for



longer and longer periods of time. Each time we came back we realized that we just wanted to be on the road more. By the time we put the house up on the market, we'd owned it because we retired there after we left the Bay Area. We'd owned it for almost 14 years. We were really ready to let it go.

I have never looked back, quite honestly. I am like that. Once I really reach a decision I'm very clear. We found a buyer and the deal went through. It's really only since last September of 2014 that we've been completely home free. From my perspective, I feel really good about it. I don't miss owning a big house.

Stephen- Host: Before we get into that a little bit, I wanted to just back up a little bit and Dave, you can chime in here too as far as, is this renting out for a little bit. That sounds like it was successful, that did free you up. There's different commitments. Maybe you could give us some of your own experience in actually renting your primary house to allow you to travel for a little bit. Maybe we could explore that.

Dave - Guest: Sure. We were really fortunate in those many years that we rented out the house. We rented it out one year to a retired gentleman and his wife who was getting a master's degree at St. John's college in Classics. We've rented it out to a series of people. Most of the time we've tried to rent it out annually, that is, for as long a year. There have been times, even more recently, when we've been there part of the time to get the house ready for sale and so on where we've rented it out for shorter periods through AirBnB and so on. Craigslist proved to be a very effective vehicle for us for renting it out.

It hasn't been a problem for a very long time. The last 5 years or so we were gone, most of the time, and had a relatively easy time renting it out.

Bonnie - Guest: I think we had very nice renters. I think people have a concern, a lot of our friends said, "How can you just leave all your things there?" Obviously I would take my most cherished items and put them away. Mostly, we left really nice things there. We left it very nicely furnished. People respected the house. They took good care of it. I'd say, out of all the people that came through in those years that we rented, we maybe had only 1, possibly 2, but just 1 unpleasant situation. The rest were all very positive.



Stephen- Host: Did you set up a management company that looked after the plumbing or the pipes or any emergencies? How did you set that up before you left?

Dave - Guest: Early on, way back in the early 2000's when we rented the house out for the first few times we had a management company. We found that we were finding the tenants for it, they were taking a big cut for doing nothing more than calling a plumber if it was necessary. What we worked out over time with tenants has been that they notify us often by email, that something has gone wrong or needs work or something. We have a fellow in Santa Fe who is a handy man. I would contact John and John would be at the house to do whatever was necessary, within 24 hours as a maximum. Often he'd be there within an hour or 2.

That worked out very well. John and Bonnie and I are really good friends. We see John, even now when we go back. He proved to be a wonderful support structure for us doing what needed to be done to the house while we were gone.

Bonnie - Guest: Also, for the gardening, we had a very reliable gardener. I'd say it's very important to set up people to take care of things, and then also, if you can have a neighbor or a friend with a house key and someone you might call. We never had to do that, but in an emergency to be able to call someone. Really, we didn't have any huge emergencies.

Dave - Guest: I don't remember any.

Bonnie - Guest: That were inconvenient. We got a call when we were in Sri Lanka one time from our tenant saying they were having a problem with something. We gave them permission to call John and take care of it. It didn't stop us.

Stephen- Host: As you've progressed through this evolution of this nomadic lifestyle, was it nice to know when you did have your house that you could always return? Did that never even factor into your travel plans when you started this?

Dave - Guest: Not very often.

Bonnie - Guest: Not very often.



- Dave - Guest: Not very often.
- Stephen- Host: Not very often?
- Bonnie - Guest: Once we're on the road-
- Dave - Guest: We want to go forever. It isn't that we don't want to stop once in awhile and a week or 10 days in 1 place, or a month, just gathering ourselves, doing the writing and the putting together of the blog. Exploring a community really thoroughly. It's not as though, "Oh goodness, here we are in Sri Lanka and really feeling homesick and wanting to go back to our lovely house in Santa Fe." I can't remember that ever happening.
- Bonnie - Guest: No.
- Stephen- Host: The decision to sell then probably was quite quick and, Bonnie, like you said, you felt even better. What was it like after you'd sold the house emotionally? How did you both feel?
- Dave - Guest: Yahoo. We are still ecstatic.
- Bonnie - Guest: So relieved not to have the ... It's just something in the back of your mind the whole time.
- Dave - Guest: It's a burden.
- Bonnie - Guest: Yeah, it's a bit of a burden. We haven't changed our minds at all.
- Dave - Guest: We're not really contemplating buying another house. We feel quite frankly that we're not sure that we will ever own property again. At my age in particular, I'm 75, health issues become more and more important. If we were faced with having to be stationary because of medical or health reasons, I think we would most likely rent somewhere rather than buy. That would probably be dictated by the health facility, the medical facilities we were attached to at the result of illness. We don't really talk about, "We'll do this for a year or two and then we'll settle down." It isn't there in our thinking or in our emotional lives.
- Stephen- Host: It's very inspiring to me and it's exciting to follow your travels so far. Right now as we do this interview you're in San Francisco, but you were just in



Australia and you're going back to Europe. One of the things that I think you love to do and allows you to slow down and see these places is your choice of your mobile condo on wheels. Maybe you could tell us about the evolution and the pluses and minuses of having your RV or your camper van. Maybe you could tell us a few stories around why that is so liberating, why that works in your travel plans.

Dave - Guest:

It's an interesting situation Steven. Let me give you a little history. Between 1994 and 2004, in that 10 year period, we probably spent 7 of those 10 years altogether in Europe. We worked 3 years across Europe, both of us flying at least 3 or 4 days a week to different capitals all over Europe working. Then, we had the boat. What we found with the boat was we had really explored what we wanted to explore of the Mediterranean. That is, from Gibraltar to Syria, Lebanon, Israel and weren't particularly drawn to anywhere else in the world where we would sail. What we found was that one, while working in Europe, we knew capitals really well but we didn't know anything more. As sailors, we knew the coast of the Mediterranean, but we didn't know much inland. That drove us to focus, to some degree, on Europe.

Not opposed to other places in the world, but certainly as a place we would return to and explore much more particularly, on a much more granular level, trying to understand the cultures and everyday life of people in those countries outside of the capitals, per say. What we did is last May and June, we rented a vehicle in Italy, brought a tent and sleeping bags that we had from prior experience and camped across Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece. It was a wonderful trip. It was 10 weeks long. It was a wonderful trip. I'm telling you, we are just a little old to be crawling in and out of a tent that's only about 4 feet high.

At that point began to think quite seriously and look at RV's. We were seeing in Europe and trying to make up our minds as to what we needed in terms of size and compatibility and so on. We then went to Germany to meet with our daughter, who happened to be there, and spent time in Germany looking at RV's all over Europe and finally settle on the one we bought. That's home to us now. At least it is for me, and I think it is for Bonnie too. That RV in Europe is as close as we have to a home. Mind you, I did measurements from the inside before we left it last October



and it's 180 square feet inside. It's, what would certainly be called a tiny house on wheels.

Stephen- Host: For people listening, I have a link. Bonnie, there's a great photograph of you on the blog. I think it's where you introduce Rambling Romy. You're in the garage and it looks quite big to me. It looks fabulous. It looks actually really roomy and really smart floorplan configuration. I think here in the US we have some great floorplans but I think Europe really gets it when it comes to these types of vehicles. Would you agree? This is a German one, right?

Dave - Guest: I would.

Bonnie - Guest: Wholeheartedly.

Dave - Guest: They don't have, we call them pop-outs. They don't have parts that extend out to the side. We never saw that in Europe at all. I don't know if they're restricted by law to not do that or what. Their designs are very effective. The design we have, the interior design, I have seen virtually identical layouts in 2 other companies' RV's. There is something a bit standardized about some of those interior layouts I think.

Bonnie - Guest: One in the US.

Dave - Guest: We saw one in the US, didn't we?

Bonnie - Guest: Yeah.

Dave - Guest: Yeah.

Stephen- Host: Great. Looking at the bed configuration, is it raised above the cab or is it in the back? It's hard for me to see it. It looks like it's near the sunroof.

Dave - Guest: It's in the back.

Stephen- Host: It is?

Dave - Guest: The very back. It's at the very back, and the garage runs across underneath it and under those cabinets that are at each side of the bed.



Stephen- Host: For people listening, I can tell they're thinking to themselves, "These 2 are world adventurer travelers," which you are, and, "That must be easy for them to do that." How would someone even go about purchasing something in Europe? What tips would you give to people around purchasing something like what you've done there in Europe?

Bonnie - Guest: We've done a lot of walk ins a lot here in the US. It's something we love to do. If we drive by some RV place and see some fun looking vehicles we'll just stop and turn around and spend a couple of hours hopping in and off of them and going to RV shows. We've always had a lot of fun with that. We've had the experience of seeing different designs and the exposure to living ourselves in a small camper. The pluses and minuses of going bigger and bigger and bigger. We had a pretty good idea about what worked and what didn't work for us.

Then it happened. When we were tent camping for 10 weeks we kept looking at RV's. We go talk to people, other different nationalities. A lot of people speak English in Europe, as you know, especially people who travel. They'd proudly show us the inside of their vehicle and we'd get information. Some of them even referred us to dealerships in the Netherlands and in Germany. There got to be a consistency when we were looking at vehicles. The way we liked the way it looks on the outside as well as the livability and flow on the inside. Having a bed that we could walk around and that was a queen sized bed became more and more important to us, especially after sleeping on an air mattress for 10 weeks in Europe.

We also wanted a drop down bed or some way that we could have guests come but not to have a layout that would be confined just because you had to have a 2nd bed. In this case we have a drop down and 2 people can sleep in that. It's very nice. Then it just tucks up in the ceiling when you're not using it. It's very much out of the way. I think we did our homework. We had a pretty good idea. We just started driving around lots. We Googled, in Germany, we Googled different dealerships. We called up, found the hours. Again, everybody speaks English in Germany, or there's someone there that does.

We just showed up and started walking around until we found this one that we felt was the best fit for us. I might add too that people probably



listening to this are thinking that something in Europe, it must cost so much, the euro and Europe is so expensive. I have to say that this particular vehicle we bought, and we bought it after it's been rented. It was in rental for the summer and we bought it in October, with how many miles on it?

Dave - Guest: About 12,000 miles.

Bonnie - Guest: About 12,000 miles. Very lightly used. They guaranteed everything and fixed everything up for us perfectly. The cost of that was literally half of an equivalent vehicle in the US. I don't know why. They're making really nice RV's there and they're making them at a much better price point than what you'd find here. When we discovered that it was a no brainer. It was like, "Let's do it."

Stephen- Host: It looks like it's brand new. Well done. Saving money is obviously important for people listening. Budgets are one of the top questions people ask. I think buying, like what you did, buying it in its first year of use is so smart because you've already got that depreciation. It makes it affordable.

Dave - Guest: Yes. Yeah. Even brand new, Stephen, the cost of this vehicle as against something equivalent in the United States would have been half.

Stephen- Host: Wow.

Dave - Guest: Half of what it would have cost here. You asked about how did we go about buying it in Europe and how do we have any reservations and anxiety people might have about doing that.

Stephen- Host: Yes.

Dave - Guest: We found a dealer in Germany, really off of the web. Off of just doing Google searches, who had probably, what, 300 vehicles there. It's a huge operation. They sell 2,000 RV's a year. That's what I said, 2,000. It's huge. They're really good. They're just on top of every aspect of the whole process. The only difficulty is you have to have some sort of residence in Germany in order to license that vehicle. This dealership has an address that they use to register vehicles after people buy them. In other words, I went with one of their staff, we went, to the city hall in the town that



they're in, Dulmen, and we registered the vehicle without any difficulty at all.

We also were taken to an insurance office and go insurance on it as well. It was a very simple process. The whole process probably took 2 hours maybe?

Bonnie - Guest: Yeah.

Dave - Guest: About 2 hours at max.

Stephen- Host: Did you get that feeling like, "It's not a big deal. This is just another day. Let us help you."

Dave - Guest: Absolutely. It was really easy.

Bonnie - Guest: In fact, they had a couple from New Zealand who had just bought one prior to us showing up on the lot. It wasn't an uncommon thing for them. Just to say that Germany is very different than Italy. We went to some of the RV lots there and talked to them about purchasing one in Italy and there was so much red tape. We were going to have to rent an apartment and have the police come over and verify we were there and then get a visa for a year. It was-

Dave - Guest: Endless.

Bonnie - Guest: In Germany they just cut to the chase. I also, I bought a van a long time ago in the Netherlands and bought it through an American woman married to a Dutch man who was running this as a business selling campers. She did the whole thing through her address as well. She took me around and within 2 hours I owned it. Then I sold it back to her in the end. The good thing about buying from this dealership too is when it gets to the time we want to sell it back it will be very easy for us to work with them to re-sell it.

Stephen- Host: I was going to say, that's another great bonus. You've got this established. They know, unlike short time renters, owners like yourself, you probably have more pride of ownership and you're actually going to take care of the vehicle and treat it like your own. When it comes back it will probably be in just as good of shape as it was new. You'll be able to



sell it to them. Which, is another fabulous reason just to do this. There's no real excuse to not. It's just like you said, like a no brainer.

Dave - Guest: Yeah. One other thing I would mention. There are some very good dealerships for RV's in Holland. The downside is, the tax on that sale in Holland is something like 21%. In Germany, you simply don't have to pay that tax. I can't remember what the tax is but it's a whole lot less than it is in Holland. That's part of the reason we spent so much time in Germany looking instead of Holland. I learned in a campground in Slovenia, I still remember, that in Holland you pay a lot more tax on the sale of a vehicle.

Stephen- Host: In traveling this way, you've obviously had a few excursions out in the new vehicle. How has it been so far in your trip so far with it?

Dave - Guest: Wonderful.

Bonnie - Guest: We had a whole month of October where we went from Germany into Luxemburg and then France and in the south there. It was wonderful in that it was a shake down. We were able to get everything outfitted and fixed out the way we wanted it and made a list of enhancements we wanted when we got back, but it was a great trip. I think a month was a good time. We found out how high we were, we found out backing up where the bushes were and we were having a ... What do you call it?

Dave - Guest: A rear view camera.

Bonnie - Guest: A rear view camera put in, yeah. We flattened a few bushes. We did nothing to the bush or to the car but the laugh about our learning curve.

Stephen- Host: When you're planning, is it more of an organic process or do you think ahead where you'd like to be for a month or two?

Dave - Guest: We tend to be pretty much free spirits, Stephen. We might say, "Where we really want to go is Eastern Europe because we haven't explored it at all. Let's go to Hungary and Bulgaria and Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, those countries." What we found was this. What shapes our planning now is what's called the Schengen Agreement. The Schengen Agreement is that borderless agreement between European countries, including nearly all of Europe anymore except for Bulgaria, Romania,



Croatia hasn't joined yet. Strangely enough, England and Ireland. The UK and Ireland. What the Schengen Agreement calls for is that any foreigner-

Bonnie - Guest: American.

Dave - Guest: Yeah, particularly Americans. There are a couple of exceptions to the general rule. Any foreigner coming into the Schengen is only allowed to be in the Schengen area for 90 days out of every 180. In effect, we have 3 months to spend in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, all those countries one would normally be drawn to, but also Hungary and the Baltic ones, the Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland.

Bonnie - Guest: They're all Schengen.

Dave - Guest: They're all Schengen countries. We've had to do considerably more planning than we are accustomed to just because of the restrictions placed on us in terms of how much time in every 6 months we can spend in the Schengen areas. To the other side of your question about alternatives to staying in Romy, if you will. We stayed with friends. We stayed with friends in Frankfort who are our long time friends from working together in the 90's.

Bonnie - Guest: Mostly it would be stuff we would visit people who invite us inside.

Dave - Guest: Yeah. In that month that we had the RV in Europe, we weren't drawn to staying outside of it at all. We're so comfortable in it.

Bonnie - Guest: In fact, in Frankfort, when we went to visit our friend, she tried to get us to stay inside and we said, "No."

Dave - Guest: We'll stay in the van.

Bonnie - Guest: We just parked it right in her driveway and it was so much easier. She didn't have to change the sheets and all that.

Dave - Guest: We didn't have to pack.

Bonnie - Guest: We didn't have to pack and move anything inside and out. You get a little lazy because you've just got everything right there organized the way you would normally have if you were living in some place for awhile.



Dave - Guest: I think that's a bit different in the states because the vehicle we have in the states is so much smaller. It doesn't reach near the comfort level of the one we have in Europe. We mix it up more then. We'll go 3 or 4 nights camping and then we'll spend a night in a motel or we'll stay with some friends. We're staying right now with friends here in the San Francisco area. We'll be here a total over 2 weeks.

Stephen- Host: I wanted to touch on that briefly because I'm here in Canada, in Vancouver Canada. I'm fortunate. I'm an immigrant, so I have my European status so I can go to Europe and stay and come back. One of the things we're researching and maybe you can help us. It's very simple, what you've done. Maintained a vehicle in North America. It could be a small camper van like you have. Is it your Volkswagen?

Dave - Guest: Yes.

Stephen- Host: Yeah. Keep it there. Then you can almost take a vacation from your travels back to visit holidays, birthdays or events or whatever you need to come back and then combine you have a vehicle here and combine that with longer term stays, maybe at a HomeAway or an AirBNB or a friend. Then, go back and fly back to your base in Europe. Is that kind of how you're working it now?

Dave - Guest: Yeah, that's pretty much it.

Bonnie - Guest: Yeah, to some degree. Although, we spend less time in the states and a bigger proportion of time abroad. We will be in Europe 5 to 6 months of the year but then we want to go other places.

Stephen- Host: Have you popped in and out of Romania or Bulgaria or Ireland or the UK to meet those requirements yet or you haven't done that yet?

Dave - Guest: We haven't had to deal with the Schengen requirements yet. We will certainly this summer. Our intention now is to go to the UK and Ireland initially from Germany and spend a good deal of time over there and then come back into Schengen and go to a huge family reunion that's happening in Italy. Then, spend the rest of the time we have in the Schengen, exploring, we haven't really settled yet where. Maybe Spain and Portugal, I'm not sure.



Stephen- Host: I want to switch gears a little bit and ask about, what are you seeing out there Dave and Bonnie? Are you part of this secret society of nomadic travelers or are you seeing a trend where more people are discovering what you're doing? Or do you still think it's a very small part of the population out there?

Dave - Guest: I think it's a real small population still, Stephen.

Bonnie - Guest: Growing.

Dave - Guest: Growing. We meet people in the states when we're in the Bay Area or we're in San Francisco or whatever who really are quite fascinated with how we're living. It doesn't mean they're going to sell their homes and become nomadic the way we have. At least I think they begin to look at more extended stays, or more extended travel, than they contemplated before. At the same time, you can go to Mexico, travel down the Pacific coast of Mexico and every place you ever stop there are lots of Canadians, particularly snowbirds and lots of Americans that are there for an extended period. They set up there. They tend to set up there and stay in one place or two or three places over a 4 or 5 month period.

They're there. They're there in force. Particularly the Canadians.

Stephen- Host: We definitely have, here in Canada, I think there's a lot of younger people that maybe have flexibility in their work, as long as they have somewhat decent internet. People are trying this lifestyle on. I'm at that age where we're 50 and we still have a few years until retirement but we think we could pull off a travel situation like yours and still work, because our business is online.

Dave - Guest: Sure.

Stephen- Host: We're very excited about that. I think travel invigorates. There's a saying I like to use, it's called a beginners mind. This concept you enter France for the first time and it's the different sights, the sounds, the smells, the food, the textures, everything, and how that, as a couple, brings you closer together, because you're sharing this brand new experience together. It's almost like it's making you younger and reinvigorating your



relationship. Maybe you can tell us a few stories around that. Have you found that to be true as well?

Bonnie - Guest: Absolutely. I'm at a lack to come up with a story, but certainly that's something that keeps our relationship fresh and live. Getting into the routine to do lists and running errands and the weekliness of life once we get back to the US and settle down for a little while, as we have this time. Just because it's necessary to stop every now and then and take care of things. Once we get back out on the road, just the freshness and days. There's some days that are absolutely magical. They fall into place in a way you get perfect weather, you happen on some street event or something and have a conversation with someone that's really good.

The whole day just snaps into place and is wonderful. That being said, when you are living life on the road, that is your life. That's the new norm. You have to do laundry, you have to do your grocery shopping, you have to wash the dishes, clean your house. It doesn't take very long, but all that stuff has to be done. In the midst of all of that you get the brilliant days that are very special. They don't even have to be huge events but something here and there.

Dave - Guest: The other side of this Stephen is something we confronted when we were sailors and we certainly confronted it being nomads in the last few years. That is, you're not living in a community. You're not participating in a community and therefore, the kind of encounters with people where you feel a friendship develop with them, you also do that with the understanding that they're going to go their way and you're going to go your way. It may be a long time before you see each other again. In other words, you don't have the power and resources of community to nearly the degree you do if you're just living in one place in a community somewhere.

Often times, because you're travelers, you're nomads, they are as well, the friendships you develop and really intense and long lasting. We have friends ... We stopped sailing in 2004, 11 years ago now. We still have friends in Australia and New Zealand that were sailing friends. We still have friends in Australia who we met traveling in Laos years earlier. There's a real bond among people who experience this sort of nomadic life we do in an extreme, even if theirs isn't as extreme as ours.



- Stephen- Host: I wanted to touch on when you're in France or Germany and let people know there are places, especially France, Germany and Italy, that there are these great, overnight, free stops, and most small towns encourage it. Could you explain how that works? Maybe pick France? Have you experienced those?
- Dave - Guest: Yeah. The sense I get always when we're in one of those or we see them is there's a lot of history around them. I think almost every village in France has a place where travelers can stay. I think it dates from centuries ago when people were traveling across the country and needed to park their wagons and their horses and so on. It's almost like the caravans of the middle east and across Asia. These are places where you can park your vehicle and stay, so long as you're self contained, as they're called. That is, you have a toilet on board. That's really what they're talking about. Although, there are other places that are free, provided by villages, where there are public toilets as well.
- Bonnie - Guest: Some with electric hookups too.
- Dave - Guest: Yeah, even electric hookups.
- Bonnie - Guest: A lot of places, we spent 2 weeks with some friends who bought a canal boat in France and they're around the Loire River. When we were with them, we'd bicycle during the day and we'd find spots along the river where people could free camp. There'd be designated spaces, not always clearly marked. I think there's websites-
- Dave - Guest: There are.
- Bonnie - Guest: Somebody's put together some kind of a GPS where these are located. It sometimes isn't that well marked. You stumble on it.
- Dave - Guest: You see them everywhere.
- Stephen- Host: I think they're called Aires, and there's quite a guidebook Aires. There's also something called the French Passion, which, I believe, it's like here in North America there's something called Harvest Host. A winery will allow you to park for free overnight. Of course you're going partake in some wine tasting. You'll probably end up buying some wine or whatever they



have locally. Are you aware of the French Passion system? It's similar to that where they team up, travelers with RV's with either a working farm or a hobby farm or a winery. Have you seen that?

Dave - Guest: Yes, we've seen that as well.

Bonnie - Guest: The Aires, now that you mention it, I remember seeing that. I'd like to also mention that we just spent 2 months in Australia and a month in New Zealand. In both places we rented a camper and drove around. They have them there as well. Designated spots you can just pull in off the road and right down the road will be a campground charging 25, 30 dollars a night. There's free camping, and right next to a park where there will be a picnic bench. Quite nice.

Stephen- Host: Do you keep it simple as far as laundry goes? Do you just keep a simple clothing attire? How do you deal with that type of aspect of those chores? How do they come up? Any tips around that?

Bonnie - Guest: It's really quite easy in Europe. All the campgrounds seem to have a laundry room with washing machines and dryers. They're coin operated. We never have any problem. When we were on the boat I had some little cranked machine I'd wash our clothes in and hang them outside on the deck. This is really civilized. They'll even have an area in the back and you just bring your clothespins and they have long lines around where you can hang your clothes to dry. In terms of laundry, that's really nice. Some of the campgrounds will actually have kitchens too where you can go in and set up if you don't care to cook inside your own vehicle and you want to go use a proper kitchen that's set up inside. I would say that all of the campgrounds-

Dave - Guest: All of them.

Bonnie - Guest: Have restaurants.

Dave - Guest: They have restaurants.

Bonnie - Guest: That was really nice when we were doing that tent camping trip for 10 weeks because we made breakfast and lunch, really simple things, but dinner we generally went to the campground restaurant and had a simple meal. It might be a pizza or something like that, but it was nice not to



have to figure that out when we were sleeping on an air mattress on the ground every night.

Stephen- Host: I think the nice thing about the lifestyle is too, if you wanted to go to the very fancy chateau for a nice meal, you still have that option to do that. Have you done that yourselves where you treated yourselves to some really nice-

Dave - Guest: Oh yeah.

Bonnie - Guest: Very much.

Dave - Guest: Very much. That's what we tend to do. We tend to cook for ourselves and then have a really nice meal out somewhere.

Bonnie - Guest: We went into some of the beautiful wineries in Burgundy and had wine tours and had a wine tasting afterwards and gulped when we saw the price of the bottles of wine. We treated ourselves to a nice bottle of wine and went back and made our own dinner. We also will treat ourselves, yeah. You have to do that every now and then. I have to say that eating and living in the van is a really healthy lifestyle. We both keep our weight down. We eat properly. We don't overeat. Give me a week in some city eating every meal out and I can pack the pounds on pretty quickly.

Dave - Guest: We get exercise almost every day. We get a serious piece of exercise just living in a van, moving around, exploring communities, exploring towns.

Bonnie - Guest: Walking, riding bikes-

Dave - Guest: Riding bikes. We really get it.

Stephen- Host: I think with your new garage, if you haven't done this, I'm sure there's a set of folding bikes on your horizon if you don't already have them.

Dave - Guest: We had folding bikes on the sail boat.

Bonnie - Guest: This has a big bike rack on the back. It came with-

Dave - Guest: It came with a bike rack.



- Bonnie - Guest: We'll keep the bikes outside, but we could put them inside and still not lose any space at all.
- Stephen- Host: A lot of people listening, some of the people listening, and in some of the interviews, I've heard one couple and they said, "Stephen, we were hotel people," then, once they discovered this way of life (RV) they said they just couldn't go back. Unless it's for an event or maybe a nice spa treatment to take a little break. To go back to the expense and confinement of a hotel vacation was not for them. I'm sure you've found that experience too.
- Dave - Guest: Exactly the way we feel about it.
- Stephen- Host: If the Davids and the Bonnie of today were to talk to the younger David and Bonnie about this way of lifestyle, what advice would you give them 20 years earlier? What would you have said to yourselves?
- Dave - Guest: That's an interesting question Stephen, and I'll tell you why. Believe it or not, Bonnie and I went back to work about 5 years ago. We retired in our 50s. Then we got lured back by an outfit called Google. We went and worked there for 3 years altogether. It was very interesting work. It's an interesting company to work for and we did it. We were constantly confronted by people who knew of our travel experiences and are young and said, "I want to live the way you do." How many times did I hear that? What I always said is, "Do it now. Work it now so you can do it now. Otherwise you have to wait until you're old."
- Bonnie - Guest: We took a big chunk of time off and we were lucky enough to be able to get back into the game. Then we worked and we refilled the kitty and went off again. We've done several cycles of that where we thought we retired and then something came our way and we went back for a year or two. We were lucky to be able to do that. I would say, don't wait too long.
- Dave - Guest: Don't wait.
- Bonnie - Guest: If you can take time off with your kids, we've seen these young families out there with their children. I'm most struck by the dads, how involved they are with the kids, how they're carting a little baby around on their



hip all day long, in a way you don't get to have unless you're traveling as a family and being together all the time, from the time you wake up in the morning until at night. I think there's a bond that goes on. People think it's so hard to go. I don't have any words of wisdom how to do it, but if you can figure out a way to do it when your kids are young and maybe another time too, I think it's very worth it.

Dave - Guest: I think as well, Stephen, that people, when they think about travel, they think about hotel travel. Their experience to this point has been a 2 week vacation in Costa Rica or somewhere or Europe. When you do that kind of thing, your expenses are really high. What people don't understand is how much less expensive it is to travel the way we do as opposed to people who fly between cities and stay in hotels and eat out every meal.

Bonnie - Guest: You can make the money go farther.

Stephen- Host: Absolutely.

Dave - Guest: Travel with a child or two, you could still travel this way and be able to afford to do it.

Bonnie - Guest: We see kids. We saw this whole group of, they were 2 French families traveling in their RV's together. It was right on the border between Guatemala and Mexico. We were in the same campground for a couple of days and those kids were having so much fun. They go to the very top of the RV and sit up on the top of the RV and just look over the whole kingdom below them.

Dave - Guest: They were being homeschooled. Their moms were on computers, on Skype, talking to teachers back in France every day. It was quite amazing.

Bonnie - Guest: It was wonderful to see families that close and kids feeling that free.

Stephen- Host: Travel is a great educator. I think once you've seen other places outside of your normal home town that it is very addictive and you get this wanderlust bug and you can't shake it. I think you're, like you said, you have no plans for returning just yet. I think that's fabulous. Thank you both so much for sharing today.

Dave - Guest: We've enjoyed it Stephen, it's been fun.



Bonnie - Guest: Thank you so much. Yeah.